

HAND TYPES: MIRROR DISTRIBUTION

More about End Plays (Throw-Ins) and Eliminating Suits

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Bridge hands have several major variations in terms of type:

- (1) Hands with mirror (or near mirror) distribution, i.e., Declarer and Dummy have the same or almost the same distribution in the suits.
- (2) Hands that are suited to trumping losers in the short-trump hand.
- (3) Hands that are suited to setting up a long suit after or during pulling trumps.
- (4) Hands that are suited to a high cross-ruff. (Don't even **think** about pulling trumps!)
- (5) Combination hands where a bit of this and a little of that is probably necessary.

When Declarer and Dummy have mirror distribution (or close to it), you should be constantly on the look-out for end-plays (also called throw-ins): **opportunities to give the opponents the lead at the time when they must make a play that helps you.** Generally that play will be to *break a new suit; provide a free finesse; or give a ruff-and-sluff.*

Remember, preparation for an end play requires that you pull trump while still retaining a trump in both hands. (Occasionally you will have to settle for pulling most of the trumps and hoping that the opponent you throw-in does NOT have a trump as an exit/escape card.) Then, you eliminate suits from both your hand and dummy in preparation for the end-play.

Certain combinations cry out for end plays:

AQ10 opposite xxx: eliminate two other non-trump suits and play an x to the 10.

AQ9 opposite 8xx: eliminate two other non-trump suits and play an x to the 9.

KJx opposite A109: eliminate one other non-trump suit; give up lead in other non-trump suit as you play the last card in that suit in both hands. Opponents will "find" the queen for you.

Qxx opposite Jxx(x): eliminate one other non-trump suit; give up lead in other non-trump suit as you play the last card in that suit in both hands. Opponents must lead this suit, limiting your losers to two (play LOW second hand). If you were forced to play the suit, you would lose three tricks.

When you are playing a 4-4 trump fit and MUST lose one trump trick, consider using that high trump in an opponent's hand as the throw-in card. For example:

AK32 A109 Qxxx Kx opposite 9654 KJ7 AKJx Ax. After a no trump opening and Stayman, you land in 6S. The lead is the queen of clubs. Pull ONLY TWO rounds of trumps. Then eliminate the second club from both hands. Now play the four diamonds. An opponent may ruff in, but s/he would have to open up hearts (or give you a ruff-and-sluff). If the opponent with the high trump refuses to ruff any of your diamonds, after the 4th diamond, play a trump and the opponents is again end-played—having to provide a ruff-and-sluff or "find" the queen of hearts for you. Making 6. NOTE: It is vital to *eliminate* your *SHORTEST* suit *FIRST*. Otherwise, an opponent could trump in while s/he still has an exit card in another suit. In this example, if you try to eliminate diamonds first, the opponent can safely escape by playing a second club. Don't give them that option!!

When you want or need that extra trick and things look hopeless, still try to "strip" the hand (eliminating side suits) as much as possible. Sometimes a miracle happens. For example:

AKQxx J32 Axx xx opposite 109xx 456 KQx AKx with a lead of queen of clubs. Pull trumps. Play second club and ruff third one. Play 3 rounds of diamonds. NOW, play a LOW heart from both hands. Occasionally, the opponents will hold AQ opposite Kxxxxx or KQ opposite Axxxx or AK opposite Qxxxx. In all those cases, if the person holding the doubleton-honor takes the 2nd round of the suit, you'll get a ruff-and-

sluff. If the person with length in the suit overtakes the partner's doubleton honor, your Jack will take a trick
MAGIC!